



The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) uses the law to promote the public interest, right wrongs, and hold companies and individuals accountable when they harm District residents. On February 13, 2020, community members, activists, and advocates testified before the Council of the District of Columbia during OAG's annual Performance Oversight (FY19-FY20) hearing about how the office's work impacts District residents.

FIGHTING WAGE THEFT

OAG has made it a priority to protect workers from wage theft and payroll fraud schemes such as worker misclassification. Since the Council granted OAG independent authority to investigate and bring wage theft cases in 2017, we have launched over 30 investigations and recovered millions of dollars from businesses that stole wages from District workers.



"Wage theft and tax fraud have become the accepted businesses model in construction. DC labor brokers exploit workers and pay no taxes or insurance on every large project and everyone is looking the other way except AG Karl Racine and his staff... Every tower crane you see has illegal activity on it and it's unfortunate."

*-Testimony of Bob Burns, Regional Manager,
Keystone Mountain Lakes Regional Council of Carpenters*

ADVOCATING FOR TENANTS & PRESERVING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

In response to the District's ongoing affordable housing crisis, OAG is using the law in creative ways to protect tenants and ensure landlords are maintaining safe and habitable conditions. OAG has filed numerous lawsuits against abusive landlords and achieved some big wins for tenants. In a 2019 settlement, notorious landlord Sanford Capital is required to return \$1.1 million to 155 tenants who were forced to live in squalor.



"We have been impressed by OAG's renewed commitment to securing safe and affordable housing for low income residents and to ensuring housing providers are held to a high standard under the law... In a single action, OAG can vindicate the rights of hundreds of households, having a massive impact on the security and habitability of those family's homes."

*-Testimony of Rachel Rintelmann, Supervising Attorney,
Housing Law Unit, Legal Aid Society for the District of Columbia*

PROTECTING SENIORS

In 2019, OAG began a unique collaboration with the U.S. Attorney's office to criminally prosecute financial crimes against seniors, and an OAG attorney has already reviewed over 100 referrals regarding potential financial crimes against elders. OAG also established its own Elder Justice Section to take civil action against those who financially exploit seniors and other vulnerable adults.



"We are fortunate here in the District to have an Office of the Attorney General which has really shown remarkable leadership in improving our community's response to victims of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation."

*-Testimony of Merry O'Brein, Finance & Grants Administrator,
Network for Victim Recovery of D.C.*

KEEPING RESIDENTS SAFE

To keep District residents safe, with support of the Council, OAG expanded its Cure the Streets (CTS) violence interruption pilot program. CTS now has 60 frontline staff working at six sites: Trinidad and Trenton Park/Whaler Place, Eckington/Truxton Circle, Marshall Heights, Bellevue, and Washington Highlands.



"The violence we see in communities that are hardest hit is the result of compound trauma. This model is the ointment for that wound. It is the treatment that can stop the spread of future violence."

*-Testimony of Markee Young, Program Manager,
Murder-Free DC, Bellvue site*

EMPOWERING VICTIMS & HOLDING OFFENDERS ACCOUNTABLE

One of the many ways OAG works to improve public safety is through its innovative Restorative Justice Program. Restorative Justice is a mediation-based alternative to prosecution that empowers victims and requires offenders to accept responsibility and repair the harm they caused. Successful mediations end with binding agreements, which often require offenders to perform community service or pay restitution, among other terms. Our preliminary data analysis reveals a 15-percentage point improvement in recidivism rates for youth who went through restorative justice compared to youth who were prosecuted traditionally.



"As a victim, it made us feel as if we had been a full participant and part of the process, had been heard, and supported... This put us in a place where we could get closure, where we could ask why it happened, where we could communicate our anger, our frustration, our sadness, and resolve it. That was very important to us."

-Testimony of Sarah Spooner, Restorative Justice participant